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Seventeenth-Century Kikongo Is Not the Ancestor of Present-Day Kikongo

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Introduction

The KongoKing project (2012–16) approached the history of the Kongo kingdom along hitherto two rather uncommon strands, i.e. archaeology and historical linguistics. While the project's archaeologists unearthed the material heritage of several sites associated with the kingdom's northernmost provincial capitals (e.g. Clist *et al.* 2015c; Clist *et al.* 2015d), the project's linguists dedicated themselves, among other things, to the study of the kingdom's linguistic legacy. Of the dozen or so works in Kikongo that were produced in the course of the seventeenth century, amongst others by Capuchins who started their Kongo mission in 1645 (Mukuna 1984: 73–6; Nsondé 1995: 14–18), only three survived the ravages of time: (1) the *Doutrina Christãa*, an interlinear Portuguese–Kikongo catechism from 1624 translated under the leadership of the Portuguese Jesuit Mateus Cardoso; (2) the *Vocabularium Latinum, Hispanicum, e Congense*, a trilingual wordlist which survived thanks to the 1652 manuscript copied by the Flemish Capuchin Joris Van Gheel; and (3) the *Regulae quaedam pro difficillimi Congensium idiomatis faciliori captu ad grammaticae normam redactae*, a grammar of Kikongo published in 1659 under the authorship of the Italian Capuchin Hyacintho Brusciotto a Vetralla. These three extant seventeenth-century sources have an exceptional scientific value. Not only do they provide us with invaluable information on the language used by early Kongo Christians and European missionaries during the heyday of the kingdom, they are also the earliest (surviving) book-length sources ever written in a Bantu language (Doke 1935). Unsurprisingly, each of these sources was republished and translated in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Guinness 1882; Van Wing and Penders 1928; Bontinck and Ndembe Nsasi 1978), even if that did not always happen with due respect for the original source. The published version

of the *Vocabularium Congense* by Van Wing and Penders (1928), for example, was so heavily reworked that the complete digitization of the original manuscript became an absolute must (cf. De Kind *et al.* 2012). That is exactly the reason why the KongoKing project team devoted considerable time and resources towards making those unique seventeenth-century as well as other early Kikongo sources accessible for modern corpus-based linguistic research. Guy Ndouli provided an electronic transcription of the entire *Vocabularium Congense*, while Ernest Nshemezimana produced an electronic transcription of a Kikongo grammar (Cuénot 1776) and Sarah Drieghe a fully digital copy of two different versions of a French–Kikongo dictionary (cf. Drieghe 2014), which French missionaries produced in the 1770s near Kinguele, the capital of the small Kakongo kingdom in present-day Cabinda (Nsondé 1995: 14, 18–25). During the digitization process, these dictionaries were also marked up using professional dictionary compilation software, i.e. TLex (Joffe and de Schryver 2002–2018).

The seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Kikongo language sources have attracted considerable scholarly attention in the twentieth century (e.g. Doke 1935; Van Bulck 1954; Bontinck 1963; 1976; Vansina 1974; Mukuna 1984; Nsondé 1995; Bonvini 1996), but they have rarely been the subject of systematic historical-linguistic research despite the fact that recorded Bantu language history actually starts with them. Consisting of a diachronic phonological approach to Kikongo as documented in the *Vocabularium Congense* (1652) and the Kakongo dictionary manuscripts (1770s) respectively, the dissertations of Jasper De Kind (2012) and Eva Bleyenbergh (2012) were innovative in this regard. Even if the seventeenth-century Kikongo documents are not old enough to yield significant insights on deep-time Bantu language history, they are definitely of key importance for gaining a better historical understanding of the Kikongo Language Cluster (KLC), which has been shown to constitute a discrete genealogical subclade within the wider Bantu language family (Bostoen *et al.* 2015b; de Schryver *et al.* 2015; Grollemund *et al.* 2015). Beyond historical linguistics *strictu sensu*, these oldest Kikongo sources also have the potential of shedding new light on the language situation within and without the Kongo kingdom, especially if they are studied in conjunction with historical testimonies as well as more recent language sources as is done in the present chapter.

In Kongo historiography, the kingdom is commonly staged as a monolingual state. Abstracting from the European languages spoken

by the foreigners whom it hosted and to a certain extent by its own elite as far as Portuguese is concerned, Kikongo is considered to be the sole language spoken within the kingdom. In this capacity, it is usually opposed to its southern neighbour Kimbundu, spoken south of the Dande River (Hilton 1985: 1) in the kingdoms of Ndongo and Matamba where Queen Njinga ruled between 1624 and 1663 (Thornton 1991). The shifting language frontier between Kikongo and Kimbundu tends to be equated with the kingdom's southern border. Thornton (1983: 70) reports how the growing influence of Portuguese residents of Angola in the kingdom's southern borderland and the accelerating import of slaves from the eastern parts of Angola resulted in a language shift from Kikongo to Kimbundu along the Bengo River and Dande River in the first part of the seventeenth century. This shift must have been very gradual since the Jesuit missionary Pero Tavares still used the Kikongo catechism of Cardoso (1624) in the 1630s for his apostolic work in the vicinity of Bengo (Jadin 1967: 283). Inversely, the foundation of the kingdom may have been the outcome of Kikongo speakers subjugating Kimbundu speakers. According to the chronicle of the Portuguese historian António de Oliveira de Cadornega from 1680 (Delgado 1972b: 188), the Kongo kingdom was founded by foreign *Meshicongo* conquerors who defeated the autochthonous population known as *Ambundos* (see also Paiva Manso 1877: 266). To the north, Kikongo is seen as clearly distinct from Kiteke spoken around Malebo Pool, notably in Kongo's neighbouring Tio states of Makoko and Ngobila (Hilton 1985; Vansina 1994). Nonetheless, the subjects of the king of Kongo supposedly only spoke one language, i.e. Kikongo, whose distribution area actually stretched far beyond the kingdom's borders, i.e. to the Kwilu and Niari rivers in the north, the Dande River in the south, Malebo Pool and the Kwango River in the east and the Atlantic Ocean to the west (Hilton 1985: 1, based on Van Wing 1921: 105; Laman 1936: lxxvii, lxxiv; Mertens 1942: 5; Van Bulck 1948: 388). Therefore, according to Obenga (1970: 156), 'no barrier existed between the inhabitants of Kongo proper and those of Dongo, Matamba, Kwimba, Kakongo, Ngoyo and Loango, because Kikongo was spoken everywhere, although with unavoidable dialectal differences' [our translation]. Such regional linguistic variation in the era of the kingdom is also acknowledged by Thornton (1983: 15) who claims that '[t]he natural barriers to travel in Kongo had much to do with the country's linguistic division into coastal, central, and eastern

dialects, and blocked the spread of Kikongo beyond the southern mountains where Kimbundu prevailed'. In Obenga's understanding, regiolectal diversity within the country was minimal, however, since he sees Kikongo as the fundament of the cultural unity of its inhabitants throughout the kingdom (Obenga 1970: 153).

This monolithic view of things conflicts with MacGaffey's contention that the consciousness of Kikongo as the property of a social group, i.e. as the language of 'the Bakongo', is a relatively recent political construct that emerged within the very specific context of early-twentieth-century European colonialism characterized by 'both rising discontent with foreign rule and awareness of incipient competition within the colonial framework between the Bakongo and other "tribes" identified as such by the administration' (MacGaffey 2016: 163). It also clashes with de Cadornega's historical account of the kingdom's ethnolinguistic landscape around 1680. In this chronicle, known as *Pauta das Naçoens do Gentio do Reino de Congo de diferente lingoa e costumes* (Delgado 1972b: 193–4), seventeenth-century Kongo is not described as a monolingual or monocultural polity, but as composed of several nations and languages: the nobility and people of the court known as *Mexicongos* (*fidalgua e gente da Corte de Congo*), the vassals of the Count of Soyo known as *Mexilongos* (*vassallos do conde de Sonho*), the *Amzicos* from Kongo's inland (*pella terra do Congo dentro*), the *Monjollos* from Kongo's hinterland (*pello sertão dentro de Congo*), the fierce and valent *Majacas* (*são como Jagas gente feroz e de valor*), the vassals of the Duke of Nsundi known as *Sundis* (*vassallos do duque de Sundi*), the vassals of the Marquis of Sonso known as *Sonsos* (*vassallos do marquez de Sonso*), the *Mumlumbos* which were another nation (*outra Nação daquela Reino*) and finally the *Mulazas* from Kongo dia Nlaza in the backlands (*de Congo de Amulaca pello sertão dentro*).

Historical-comparative research carried out within the KongoKing project also forces one to question the assumed linguistic unity of Kikongo. In his referential classification of the Bantu languages, Guthrie (1948) singles out an H.10 group in which he gives Kikongo as a language the H.16 code. In the revised version of 1971, he considers the language to be composed of the following dialects (which are conventionally indicated with lowercase letters following the base code): 'H.16a S. Kongo [Angola, Congo-Kinshasa]', 'H.16b C. Kongo [Congo-Kinshasa]', 'H.16c Yombe [Congo-Kinshasa]', 'H.16d

W. Kongo (Fiote) [Cabinda, Congo-Kinshasa], ‘H.16e Bwende [Congo-Brazzaville, Congo-Kinshasa], ‘H.16f Laadi [Congo-Brazzaville], ‘H.16g E. Kongo [Congo-Kinshasa]’ and ‘H.16h S.E. Kongo [Angola, Congo-Kinshasa]’ (Guthrie 1971). It is not a coincidence that all varieties, which Guthrie classifies as dialects of H.16 Kikongo, roughly occur within the perimeter of the ancient Kongo kingdom. The other members of his larger ‘H.10 Kikongo’ group, i.e. ‘H.11 Bembe [Congo-Brazzaville], ‘H.12 Vili [Congo-Brazzaville], ‘H.13 Kunyi [Congo-Brazzaville], ‘H.14 Ndingi [Cabinda]’ and ‘H.15 Mboka [Cabinda]’¹, are all situated outside its former borders. As Guthrie (1948: 5) admits, his inventory is largely based on Laman’s understanding of the early-twentieth-century language situation in the Lower Congo region, as seen in Laman’s (1936) Kikongo dialect map published in his Kikongo–French dictionary. As a missionary-ethnographer and linguist, Laman collaborated closely with Kikongo-speaking intelligentsia and set up a project to collect their written accounts of Kongo history and social life (cf. MacGaffey 1986a; MacGaffey 2000b: 18–42). This collaborative work was brought together (in abbreviated and translated form) in a posthumously published ethnography (Laman 1953; Laman 1957; Laman 1962; Laman 1968). In this respect, it is not unlikely that Laman’s analysis of language affiliations was influenced by the then ongoing formation of a (new) Kongo identity and the (re)interpretation of Kongo history associated with it.

In any event, the state-of-the-art phylogenetic classification by de Schryver *et al.* (2015), which relies on ninety-two items of basic vocabulary, has indicated that Guthrie’s referential classification – and by extension Laman’s – is not entirely in phase with genealogical language grouping within the Lower Congo. First of all, out of ninety-five different western Bantu languages forty constitute a discrete clade within the West-Coastal Bantu branch, aka ‘West-Western Bantu’ (Grollemund *et al.* 2015). De Schryver *et al.* (2015) have coined the term ‘Kikongo Language Cluster’ (KLC) for this specific West-Coastal Bantu subgroup. This vast cluster stretches from southern Gabon to northern Angola including Cabinda and covers significant parts of southern Congo-Brazzaville and western Congo-Kinshasa. Its internal classification is shown in Figure 3.1, reproduced from de Schryver *et al.* (2015: 139). In contrast to what its name suggests,

¹ According to fieldwork carried out by Heidi Goes in 2015, no Mboka language is spoken in current Cabinda.



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Kikongo clusters quite neatly with two other subgroups, i.e. Central Kikongo and East Kikongo, which correspond more or less to Guthrie's 'H.16b C. Kongo', represented here by Kindibu and Kimanyanga, and 'H.16g E. Kongo', represented here by Kintandu, Kimpangu and several other varieties spoken east of the Inkisi River. However, 'H.16c Yombe' and 'H.16d W. Kongo' on the one hand and 'H.16e Bwende' (for which Kisundi from Boko is the best fit in Figure 3.1) and 'H.16f Laadi' on the other hand clearly belong to distinct and more distant subclades, i.e. West Kikongo and North Kikongo respectively. The other members of Guthrie's H.10 group also belong to one of these subclades: H.11 Bembe and H.13 Kunyi to North Kikongo and H.12 Vili and H.14 Ndingi to West Kikongo. In other words, there is less linguistic unity within so-called 'core Kikongo (H.16)' than what is traditionally assumed.

This is confirmed by the basic vocabulary similarity rates between a selected set of present-day KLC varieties that belong to distinct subclades as presented in Table 3.1. Most (and in Table 3.1, all) correspondence rates are significantly below the 86% threshold that is conventionally used in Bantu linguistics to distinguish between separate related languages and different dialects of the same language (Bastin *et al.* 1999: vi). To compare, the lexical similarity rate between Standard Dutch and Modern Standard German is 76.8%, between Standard Dutch and Bremen Low German 81.8% (Gooskens *et al.* 2011). Few people today would consider Dutch and German as dialects of the same language. Their mutual intelligibility is not natural. It strongly depends on the speaker's degree of exposure. Experimental studies of mutual intelligibility between Kikongo varieties are not available. However, to go by the cognacy rates of about 70% between Kisikongo, Kiyombe and Cilaadi, one should certainly not consider them as just varieties of the same Kikongo language, as Laman and Guthrie did. Laman possibly overrated the proximity between Kikongo varieties because he operated from an area where Kimanyanga was predominant. As can be seen in Table 3.1, only the lexical resemblance rates observed between Kimanyanga and Kisikongo and between Kimanyanga and Cilaadi approach an 80% threshold. Also Kiyombe, Kintandu and Kiyaka are lexically more similar to Kimanyanga than to any other variety. This is not a coincidence. As de Schryver *et al.* (2015: 138, 144) argue, the Central Kikongo subgroup, to which Kimanyanga belongs, is a language convergence zone rather than a true genealogical subunit resulting from regular descent. It developed through contact between

Table 3.1 Basic vocabulary similarity rates between selected present-day KLC varieties

	S		SW	E	C	N	NW	KKoid
	Kisikongo	Kiyombe	Kintandu	Kimanyanga	Cilaadi	Yipunu	Kiyaka	
Kisikongo		70.6%	70.6%	79.3%	68.5%	38.0%	58.7%	
Kiyombe	70.6%		65.2%	75.0%	67.4%	45.6%	59.8%	
Kintandu	70.6%	65.2%		73.9%	68.5%	39.1%	59.8%	
Kimanyanga	79.3%	75.0%	73.9%		78.2%	43.5%	60.9%	
Cilaadi	68.5%	67.4%	68.5%	78.2%		43.5%	58.7%	
Yipunu	38.0%	45.6%	39.1%	43.5%	43.5%		45.6%	
Kiyaka	58.7%	59.8%	59.8%	60.9%	58.7%	45.6%		

languages belonging to the other subclades. This language contact was so strong that it left a measurable effect in the phylogenetic tree.

Relatively low lexical similarity rates, as observed for instance between Yipunu or Kiyaka and other varieties in Table 3.1, led the KongoKing project team to abandon their originally chosen designation of ‘Kikongo Dialect Continuum’ in favour of ‘Kikongo Language Cluster’. This cluster of regional varieties does indeed manifest a family resemblance structure characteristic of a dialect continuum in the sense that adjacent varieties are mutually intelligible while varieties at the extreme ends of the chain are not. But, the variation within this language cluster of the Bantu family is too significant to consider all its members as varieties of the same language. Regiolectal variation rather occurs within each of its subclades.

One could argue, as has often been done, that the divergence within the KLC is a recent phenomenon that only started during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries – when the strongly centralized structure of the Kongo kingdom collapsed (Obenga 1970; Pinçon and Ngoïe-Ngalla 1990; Futi 2012) – or that it is an even later phenomenon (Ntunda Nzeza 2007). Nevertheless, as suggested in de Schryver *et al.* (2015), we believe that the major subclades of the KLC were established long before the Kongo kingdom emerged. The historical-comparative linguistic study of the seventeenth-century Kikongo sources undertaken in this chapter will help us to further substantiate this claim. We will demonstrate that the language variety used or described in these documents is predominantly the South Kikongo variety spoken at the Kongo court, which was by that time already clearly distinct from South Kikongo varieties spoken to the east and west of Mbanza Kongo and definitely from the East Kikongo, North Kikongo and West Kikongo varieties spoken in the kingdom’s northern provinces. Several nineteenth- and twentieth-century missionary scholars of Kikongo and Kongo history have pondered on the exact origins of the language found in these documents. Relying on both linguistic and historical deductions, Bentley (1887: xii), Van Wing and Penders (1928: xxx–xxxi) and Bontinck (1976: 155) argue that the seventeenth-century Kikongo as found in the historical documents was the variety spoken in the kingdom’s westernmost Soyo province. It would thus have been the most direct ancestor of the present-day Kisolongo variety spoken along the Atlantic Coast, both north and south of the Congo delta. This is the region where European missionaries involved in the production of the seventeenth-century Kikongo

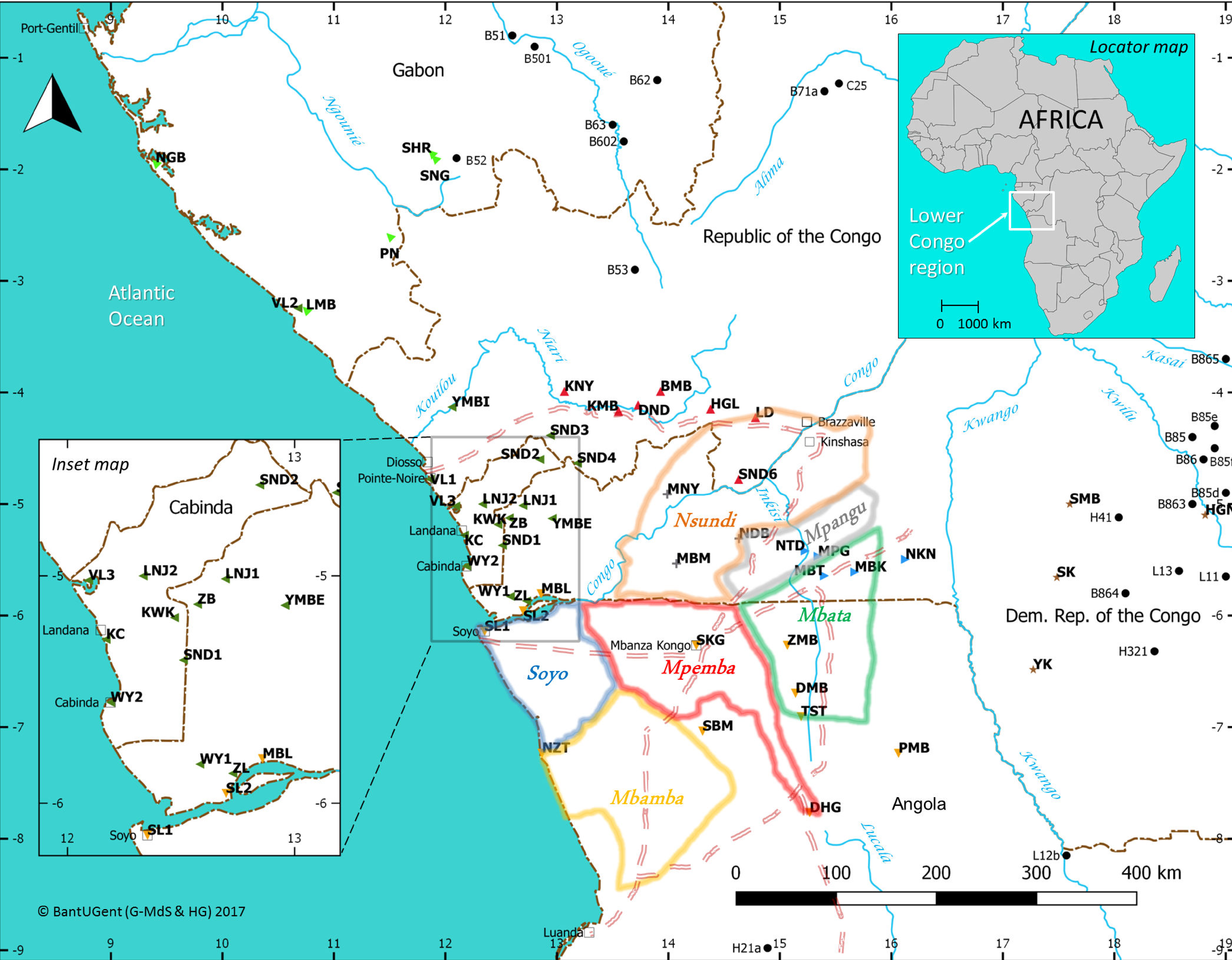
language documents would have started their missionary work and begun their acquisition of Kikongo. In this chapter, we reconsider the linguistic evidence on which Bentley (1887: xii), Van Wing and Penders (1928: xxx–xxxi) and Bontinck (1976: 155) rely to validate their conclusion. Additionally, several other phonological features of seventeenth-century Kikongo are analyzed. This diachronic phonological approach leads to a different conclusion, which is also far more in line with common sense from a strictly historical point of view, namely that seventeenth-century Kikongo predominantly represents the variety spoken in the vicinity of the kingdom’s ancient inland capital of Mbanza Kongo. That variety is the most direct ancestor of the Kisikongo variety still spoken in that area today.

A study of the phonological shape of common Bantu words in Van Gheel’s (1652) dictionary manuscript led De Kind (2012) to identify the principal sound changes undergone by seventeenth-century Kikongo with regard to the sound system reconstructed for Proto-Bantu, which were then compared with the sound changes undergone by Kisikongo as described in Bentley (1887), (1895) and Ndonga Mfuwa (1995) and by Kisolongo as described in Tavares (1915). In this chapter, we also consider the two other seventeenth-century Kikongo sources as well as comparative data from other more recent Kikongo varieties spoken in northern Angola and other parts of the KLC. For reasons of space, we focus here on four characteristic phonological features of seventeenth-century Kikongo: (1) the retroflexion of *d in front of high front vowels or *d > r /V__*i; (2) *p lenition in intervocalic position; (3) *b loss in intervocalic position; and (4) phonological augment merger. Earlier scholars considered the first as conclusive evidence for the closer affiliation of seventeenth-century Kikongo with present-day Kisolongo. We show that this is not the case. The other three features are more indicative of the genealogical position of seventeenth-century Kikongo within the KLC. Before considering the diachronic phonological evidence, we first discuss the position of seventeenth-century Kikongo in a diachronic lexicon-based phylogeny of the KLC, which serves as a preliminary reference framework for crosschecking sound shifts.

Position of Seventeenth-Century Kikongo in a Diachronic Lexicon-based Phylogeny

Figure 3.2 is a distribution map of the KLC’s present-day subclades (cf. fig. 7.2 in Bostoen and de Schryver 2018) superimposed on the

Figure 3.2 Map of the present-day KLC subclades superimposed on the approximate location of the Kongo kingdom’s main provinces in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries



Kikongo Language Cluster (KLC) clades

- ★ Kikongoid
- + Central Kikongo
- ▲ North Kikongo
- ▶ East Kikongo
- ▼ South Kikongo
- ◀ northern West Kikongo (B40)
- ◀ southern West Kikongo (H10)

LEGEND

- Soyo
- modern-day place name
- modern-day country boundary (often following a river)
- Inkisi river
- historical trade route
- non-KLC variety

KLC varieties

▲ **BMB** Kibembe; ▼ **DHG** Dihungu; ▼ **DMB** Kindamba; ▲ **DND** Kidondo; ▲ **HGL** Kihangala; ★ **HGN** Kihungan; ◀ **KC** Ikoci; ▲ **KMB** Kikamba; ▲ **KNY** Kikunyi; ◀ **KWK** Ikwakongo; ▲ **LD** Cilaadi; ◀ **LMB** Yilumbu; ◀ **LNJ1** Cilinji (DRC); ◀ **LNJ2** Ilinji (Cabinda); ▶ **MBK** Kimbeko; ▼ **MBL** Kimbala; + **MBM** Kimboma; ▶ **MBT** Kimbata; + **MNY** Kimanyanga; ▶ **MPG** Kimpangu; + **NDB** Kindibu; ◀ **NGB** Yingubi; ▶ **NKN** Kinkanu; ▶ **NTD** Kintandu; ▼ **NZT** Kikongo from N'zeto; ▼ **PMB** Kipombo; ◀ **PN** Yipunu; ▼ **SBM** Kisibemba; ◀ **SHR** Yishira; ★ **SK** Kisuku; ▼ **SKG** Kisikongo; ▼ **SL1** Kisolongu (Angola); ▼ **SL2** Kisolongu (DRC); ★ **SMB** Kisamba; ◀ **SND1** Cisundi (Cabinda); ◀ **SND2** Kisundi (Cabinda); ◀ **SND3** Kisundi (Kimongo); ◀ **SND4** Kisundi (Kifouma); ▲ **SND6** Kisundi (Boko); ◀ **SNG** Yisangu; ▼ **TST** Kitsootso; ◀ **VL1** Civili (Congo); ◀ **VL2** Civili (Gabon); ◀ **VL3** Civili (Cabinda); ◀ **WY1** Ciwoyo (DRC); ◀ **WY2** Iwoyo (Cabinda); ★ **YK** Kiyaka; ◀ **YMBE** Kiyombe (DRC); ◀ **YMBI** Kiyombi (Congo); ◀ **ZB** Kizobe; ◀ **ZL** Cizali; ▼ **ZMB** Kizombo

non-KLC varieties (which are indicated on this map)

● **B501** Wanzi (Moanda); ● **B51** Duma (Lastoursville); ● **B52** Nzebi; ● **B53** Tsaangi (Poungi); ● **B602** Kaningi (Nord); ● **B62** Mbaama; ● **B63** Ndumu; ● **B71a** Teke (Djoko); ● **B85** Yans; ● **B85d** Nsong; ● **B85e** Mput; ● **B85f** Nsambaan; ● **B86** Ding; ● **B863** Mpiin; ● **B864** Ngong; ● **B865** Nzadi; ● **C25** Mboshi; ● **H21a** Kimbundu; ● **H321** Soonde; ● **H41** Mbala; ● **L11** Pende; ● **L12b** Holu; ● **L13** Kwezo

approximate location of the Kongo kingdom's six main sixteenth-century and seventeenth-century provinces based on Randles (1968: 22), and trade routes shown as broken double lines (cf. Hilton 1985: 76; Vansina 1998: 264).

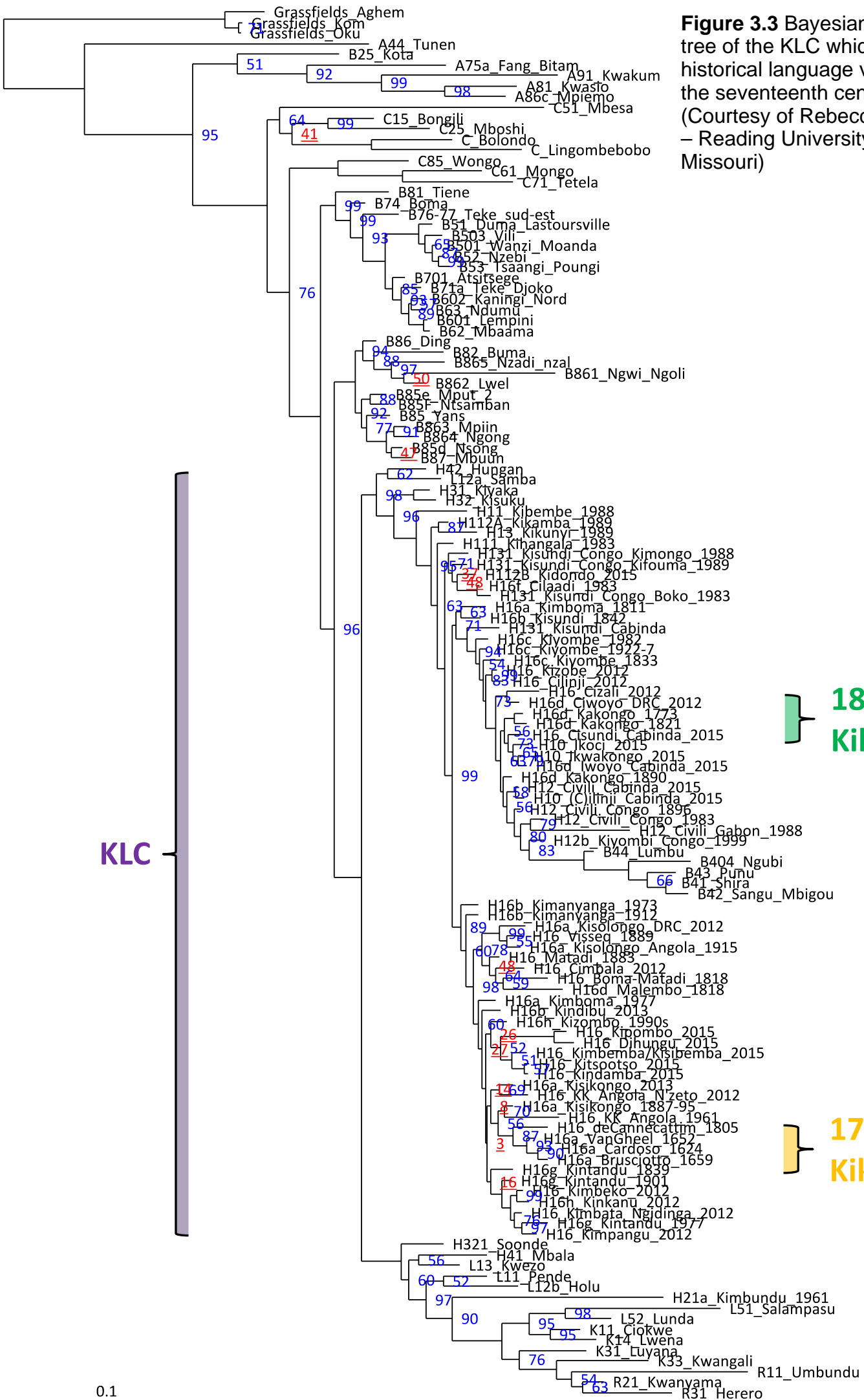
Although a one-to-one correspondence between the present-day distribution of Kikongo varieties and the linguistic landscape of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries is impossible, one can deduce with quite some likelihood from Figure 3.2 that South Kikongo must have prevailed in the kingdom's heartland. The areas that correspond to the Mpemba and Soyo provinces, which comprise the kingdom's capital Mbanza Kongo and its main coastal settlement Mbanza Soyo respectively, are today exclusively South Kikongo speaking. Such is true for the southernmost Mbamba province located in the southern Kikongo borderland with Kimbundu. South Kikongo varieties must also have been present in the easternmost Mbata province together with East Kikongo varieties in its northern part. The western border of the East Kikongo language zone is the Inkisi River, which crosscut the kingdom's three northernmost provinces: Mbata, Mpangu and Nsundi. These three provinces straddle the present-day distribution areas of East Kikongo and Central Kikongo. Nsundi may have additionally incorporated North Kikongo speech communities in its northern borderland. As summarised in Table 3.2, in terms of distribution across the provinces as recognized by Randles (1968: 22), South Kikongo and East Kikongo were probably the principal language groups within the Kongo kingdom of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. West Kikongo was spoken in closely related polities, such as the kingdoms of Ngoyo, Kakongo and Loango, but was marginal to the Kongo kingdom. It was only present in its northwestern borderland in the vicinity of present-day Boma and Matadi, just like North Kikongo was confined to the northeastern borderland within the Nsundi province. It was contact between South Kikongo and these other KLC subclades in the kingdom's northernmost provinces that gave rise to the central convergence zone from which present-day varieties, such as Kimanyanga and Kindibu, evolved (de Schryver *et al.* 2015; Dom and Bostoen 2015; Bostoen and de Schryver 2018).

From what precedes, it is beyond any reasonable doubt that the Kikongo documented in the seventeenth-century language sources is South Kikongo of some kind. The Bayesian consensus tree in Figure 3.3 corroborates this informed deduction. This tree represents

Table 3.2 Assumed distribution of Kikongo language groups across the kingdom's provinces (and neighbouring kingdoms)

	Mpemba	Soyo	Mbamba	Mbata	Mpangu	Nsundi	(Ngoyo, Kakongo, Loango)
South							
East							
Central							
North							
West							

Figure 3.3 Bayesian consensus tree of the KLC which includes historical language varieties from the seventeenth century onwards (Courtesy of Rebecca Grollemund – Reading University/University of Missouri)



the phylogenetic relationships between 107 western Bantu varieties from the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, of which fifty-two belong to the KLC together with twenty-one historical Kikongo varieties from the seventeenth until the early twentieth centuries. The basic vocabulary of these historical varieties was compared to that of the present-day varieties as if all were contemporary. In comparison to the phylogenetic classification by de Schryver *et al.* (2015), the tree in Figure 3.3 contains new synchronic data for five additional Kikongo varieties from Northern Angola (Kipombo, Dihungu, Kisibemba, Kitsootso and Kindamba) collected with the help of Prof. Manuel Ndonga Mfuwa (Universidade Augustinho Neto) and Afonso Teca (University of Bayreuth), and five additional varieties from Cabinda (Kisundi, Ikoci, Ikwakongo, Civili and Ilinji) collected through fieldwork by Heidi Goes (UGent) in 2015. Furthermore, the datasets for two Cabindese varieties (Cisundi and Iwoyo) were also updated by Heidi Goes, as was the dataset for one variety from Congo-Brazzaville (Kidondo) thanks to fieldwork by Sebastian Dom (UGent) in 2015.

In this new phylogenetic tree, in which synchronic and diachronic data are thus considered jointly, the three seventeenth-century language sources – i.e. Cardoso's (1624) catechism represented with fifty-three basic vocabulary items, Van Gheel's (1652) dictionary with the full set of ninety-two items and Brusciotto's (1659) grammar with only thirty-seven items – cluster together as immediate relatives within the wider South Kikongo cluster, in contrast to several other historical Kikongo varieties. For example, the second-oldest collection of language sources from the KLC, i.e. Kikongo as spoken in the Kakongo area during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, is clearly part of West Kikongo. Within South Kikongo, the seventeenth-century varieties seem to occupy a very specific genealogical position. They are part of the discrete subclade to which also belong early-nineteenth-century Kikongo as documented in de Cannecattim (1805), late-nineteenth-century Kikongo as recorded by Bentley (1887, 1895), twentieth-century Kikongo as found in da Silva Maia (1961) and twenty-first-century Kisikongo as spoken by José T. Kumenda, the principal consultant for the grammar of Ndonga Mfuwa (1995), whom Gilles-Maurice de Schryver and Jasper De Kind (UGent) interviewed in Verviers (Belgium) in 2013. The Kikongo variety spoken at N'zeto, as recorded by Astrid De Neef (2013), is also part of this same subclade. The data from Bentley (1887, 1895) and Kumenda (2013) represent Kikongo as spoken in

Mbanza Kongo/San Salvador itself. The exact origin of the Kikongo in the multilingual Portuguese–(Latin–)Kimbundu–Kikongo dictionaries of de Cannecattim (1805) and da Silva Maia (1961) is unknown, but just like the Kikongo in the seventeenth-century sources, it turns out to be closer to Kisikongo as spoken in the kingdom’s former capital than to the two other main South Kikongo varieties, i.e. Kisolongo spoken along the Atlantic coast and associated with the kingdom’s Soyo province and Kizombo spoken to the east of Mbanza Kongo and associated with the Bazombo long-distance traders at the time of the Kongo kingdom. Both Kizombo and Kisolongo are part of what seem to be two distinct subunits within South Kikongo. Kizombo clusters with a series of smaller southeastern Kikongo varieties (Kipombo, Dihungu, Kisibemba, Kitsootso and Kindamba) spoken in the current-day Uíge province situated to the east of the Zaire province, which is home to both Kisikongo and Kisolongo. Early-twentieth-century Angolan Kisolongo as represented in Tavares (1915) rather clusters with a number of varieties from the Boma-Matadi area on the other side of the Congo delta, i.e. the present-day Congolese Kisolongo and Kimbala varieties for which the KongoKing project team collected field data in 2012 and a number of historical varieties as found in Tuckey (1818), Craven and Barfield (1883) and Visseq (1889). Although the Holy Ghost missionary Alexandre Visseq, who did missionary work in the 1880s both north and south of the Congo mouth (Njami *et al.* 2014), calls the variety which he described ‘Fiote’, Starr (1908: 86) had already identified it as indeed being Kisolongo. In sum, the South Kikongo subclade consists of three subunits, i.e. a western one, which includes Kisolongo, situated on both sides of the Congo delta, a central one clustering around the variety spoken at Mbanza Kongo, namely Kisikongo, and an eastern one with Kizombo as main variety. From the viewpoint of their basic vocabulary, the oldest seventeenth-century Kikongo language sources are unmistakably part of the central subunit of the south cluster and thus most likely represent the variety that was spoken in the kingdom’s capital at that time.

Retroflexion of *d in Front of High Front Vowels

The orthographic peculiarity of the seventeenth-century Kikongo sources which has drawn most scholarly attention so far is no

doubt the use of <r> in the *Vocabularium Congense* manuscript of Van Gheel (1652) and the grammar of Brusciotto (1659) in correspondence to <d> in the catechism of Cardoso (1624) and most other South Kikongo sources.² Following de Cannecattim (1805: 152), both Bentley (1887: xii) and Bontinck (1976: 155) cite the use of <r> instead of <d> and <l> as evidence for the fact that Van Gheel (1652) and Brusciotto (1659) documented the Kikongo variety spoken in the Soyo province along the Atlantic coast rather than the variety spoken at the court in Mbanza Kongo as found in the catechism of Cardoso (1624) (Ca). De Cannecattim (1805: 152) describes this supposedly dialectal variation as follows: *Por quanto os de Sonho escrevem, e pronunciação com a letra R assim no principio, como no meio da palavra, no que se conformão com os Abundas: os da Corte do Congo pelo contrario em lugar da dita letra R servem-se da letra D v. g., o número dous, aquelles povos escrevem Sambuári, e estes Sambuádi* [‘Inasmuch as those from Sonho write and pronounce with the letter R both in the beginning and the middle of the word, they conform themselves to the Ambunda; those from the Court of Congo on the contrary instead of the above-mentioned letter R serve themselves of the letter D, e.g. the number seven, the ones write *Sambuári*, the others *Sambuádi*’]. First of all, it is important to note that this variation is not observed in all contexts. As shown in (1) below, it is the reflex of Proto-Bantu *d before the Proto-Bantu near-close front vowel *ɪ which has become the close front vowel i in the KLC. The unconditioned, intervocalic reflex of *d in front of vowels such as a is l as can be observed in the reflexes of *-did- ‘weep’, which unites both contexts. Moreover, as the few examples in (1) illustrate, the use of <r> in front of i is systematic in neither Van Gheel (1652) (VG) nor Brusciotto (1659) (Br) in contrast to what is assumed by de Cannecattim (1805: 152), Bentley (1887: xii) and Bontinck (1976: 155). The two documents from the 1650s testify to both orthographic conventions.

² According to conventions adopted within the field of linguistics, a letter written between < > represents a grapheme, the smallest unit in the spelling of a language. A phoneme, the smallest semantically distinctive unit in the sound system of a language, is written between / /, while [] are used to mark the phonetic transcription of speech sounds, i.e. the way they are actually pronounced.

- (1) The graphic variation between / r / and / d / in seventeenth-century Kikongo sources

*- di - ‘eat’	>	cu-dia (Ca), cu-ria ‘ <i>cibus; comedo; edo; esca; praudeo</i> ’, cu-dia ‘ <i>comedo</i> ’ (VG), - ria (Br)
*- did - ‘weep; shout; wail’	>	- dila (Ca), cu-rila ‘ <i>lamentor; ploro</i> ’ (VG, Br)
*- ding - ‘search for; desire’	>	- dinga (Ca), cu-dinga ‘ <i>quero</i> ’ (VG)
*- dimbam - ‘stick to’	>	cu-ribama ‘ <i>adhereo</i> ’ (VG), cu-ribica (Br)
*- dimba/u ‘valley’	>	mu-dimbu (Ca), marimba ‘ <i>uallis</i> ’ (VG)
*- godu ‘mother’	>	ngudi (Ca, Br), ngúdi ‘ <i>mater</i> ’, ngúri ecanda ‘ <i>mater familias</i> ’ (VG)

The variable notation of the same consonant as either < r > or < d > might indicate that the very sound had maybe a pronunciation that was intermediate between [r] and [d], as suggested by de Cannecattim (1805: 152): *Porém examinando-se a fundo este negocio; achar-se-ha que todos eles pronunciação huma mesma letra, que não he nem D rotundo, nem R expresso; mas sim huma letra propria, e particular dos de Guiné, cuja pronunciação medeia entre o D, e R, e que proferida por hum mesmo sujeito, parece humas vezes, que pronuncia a letra D, e outras a letra R* [‘However, when one examines this question in depth, one will find that all of them pronounce the same letter, which is neither a round D nor a neat R, but it is a letter of its own, and in particular to those of Guinea, whose pronunciation is in between D and R, and when uttered by a same subject, it sometimes seems that (s) he pronounces the letter D and other times the letter R’]. This intermediate sound may well have been the retroflex [ɽ] which Hyman (2003: 55) assumes was indeed the original pronunciation of [d] before high vowels in both the Kongo and Sotho-Tswana groups. Within the KLC, such retroflex sounds in front of high front vowels are attested in several present-day North Kikongo varieties, such as Kibembe (Laman 1936: lxx; Jacquot 1962: 235, who calls it a ‘vibrante apicale simple’; Nsaiy 1984: 43; Nguimbi-Mabiala 1999: 100–1) and Kihangala (Nguimbi-Mabiala 1999: 64). In West Kikongo, ***di** is most often reflected as **li** instead of **ri** or **di**. Given the scattered distribution of retroflexion before high vowels within the KLC, it could indeed be an archaism that still occurred in seventeenth-century Kikongo and was

(inconsistently) noted as <ri>. If so, it is a feature that was lost in South Kikongo soon after, since in all varieties from the nineteenth century onwards *di is invariably reflected as di, as shown in (2) with data from early-nineteenth-century South Kikongo (de Cannecattim 1805) (dC), late-nineteenth-century Congolese South Kikongo as documented by Craven and Barfield (1883) (C&B), late-nineteenth-century Kisikongo (Bentley 1887, 1895) (Be), late-nineteenth-century northern Kisolongo as documented by Visseq (1889) (Vi), early-twentieth-century southern Kisolongo (Tavares 1915) (Ta), mid-twentieth-century South Kikongo as documented in da Silva Maia (1961) (dS), late-twentieth-century Kizombo (Carter and Makondekwa 1987) (C&M) and Kisikongo (Ndonga Mfuwa 1995) (NM), present-day Kimboma (Kisilu Meso 2001; Nkiawete Wabelua 2006) (KM; NW) and present-day Congolese Kisolongo (KongoKing fieldnotes 2012) (KK).

- (2) The consistency of / di / in South Kikongo sources since the nineteenth century

*-dí- ‘eat’	> n-dia (dC), -dia (C&B, Be, Vi, Ta, dS, NM, KM), -dya (C&M, KK)
*-did- ‘weep; shout; wail’	> -dila (dC, C&B, Be, Vi, Ta, dS, C&M, NM, KM, KK)

In sum, despite the importance which de Cannecattim (1805: 152), Bentley (1887: xii) and Bontinck (1976: 155) have attributed to this orthographic peculiarity in the two Kikongo sources from the 1650s, <ri> turns out to be totally irrelevant for a better understanding of the genealogical position of seventeenth-century Kikongo within South Kikongo. It is simply an archaism that is still attested today in other subclades of the KLC, but no longer in South Kikongo.

Intervocalic Lenition of *p

Another striking grapheme in the *Vocabularium Congense* manuscript of Van Gheel (1652) is <bh>. It is also used in the grammar of Brusciotto (1659), but not in the catechism of Cardoso (1624), where it is noted as (Bontinck and Ndembe Nsasi 1978: 53). As argued in De Kind *et al.* (2012: 169–71), this grapheme represents the voiced bilabial fricative / β / to be distinguished from the voiced labiodental fricative / v /, which is noted as <u> in all three seventeenth-century

Kikongo sources. In their rework of the *Vocabularium Congense*, Van Wing and Penders (1928) merged both graphemes – some inconsistencies notwithstanding – into < v > in accordance with the sound system of most present-day Kikongo varieties, including Kisikongo, where the distinction between / β / and / v / is indeed no longer phonemic. However, it still was in seventeenth-century Kikongo. While / β /, noted as either < bh > or < b >, systematically corresponds to Proto-Bantu intervocalic *p followed by a non-closed vowel (3a), / v /, noted as < u >, is the reflex of any Proto-Bantu voiced stop in front of the closed back vowel *u and of Proto-Bantu *b preceding the closed front vowel *i (3b). This shift of stops, such as /b/, to fricatives, such as /v/, in front of closed vowels is a common Bantu sound change known as ‘spirantization’ (Schadeberg 1995; Bostoen 2008). Within the KLC, / v / is the most frequent outcome of spirantization.

(3) The graphic distinction between / β / and / v / in seventeenth-century Kikongo

- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|---|---|
| a. | *-pí- ‘be burnt, hot, cooked’ | > | cú-bhia ‘uro’ (VG) |
| | *-piâ ‘fire’ | > | tu-bia (Ca), oqui a tú-bhia ‘incendarius’ (VG), tu-bhia (Br) |
| | *-pèep- ‘blow (as wind)’ | > | npebhele ‘uentus secundus’ (VG) |
| | *-páan- ‘give’ | > | -bâna (Ca), cu-bhana ‘do; perhibeo; tribúo’ (VG), -bhana (Br) |
| | *-páng- ‘act, make’ | > | cu-banga (Ca), cu-bhanga ‘ago; efficio; facio; tracto’ (VG), -bhanga (Br) |
| | *-pód- ‘be cold, cool down’ | > | cu-bhola ‘absorbeo; allicio; frigesco; morior’ (VG) |
| | *-póp- ‘speak’ | > | cu-bôba (Ca), cu-bhobha ‘dico’ (VG), -bhobha (Br) |
| b. | *-bímb- ‘swell’ | > | cú-úimba ‘inflo; obsturgao; túmeo’ (VG) |
| | *-bimbà ‘corpse’ | > | edi-uimbu (Ca), e-uimbu ‘cadaver; corpus’ (VG) |
| | *-bitá ‘war’ | > | üita ‘bellum; certamen’ (VG), quibhanga vita ‘warrior’ (Br) |
| | *-bîi ‘excreta’ | > | tú-úi ‘fimus’ (VG) |
| | *-búdâ ‘rain’ | > | n-úúla ‘imber; plúúia’ (VG), n-úúla (Br) |
| | *-dùm- ‘roar, rumble’ | > | cú-úúma ‘floreo; horreo; timeo; tono; tremo’ (VG) |
| | *-dumbí ‘continuous rain’ | > | mu-uumbi ‘diluuium’ (VG) |
| | *-dògù/dàgù ‘wine, beer’ | > | ndúúú a malaúú ‘uinipotor’ (VG) |

This seventeenth-century distinction between / **β** / and / **v** / is lost in subsequent sources from the South Kikongo language domain. As shown in (4), the cognates of the words in (3a) and (3b) are indistinctly written with < **v** > in South Kikongo documents since the early nineteenth century.

- (4) Loss of the orthographic distinction between < **b(h)** > and < **v** > in South Kikongo
- | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|---|--|
| a. | *-pí- ‘be burnt, hot, cooked’ | > | -vica (dC), -via (C&B, Be, Vi, dS),
-vika (Ta, dS, C&M) |
| | *-píà ‘fire’ | > | <u>tu-bia</u> (dC, Ta), <u>tu-via</u> (C&B, dS),
<u>touvía</u> (Vi) |
| | *-pèep- ‘blow (as wind)’ | > | -veva ‘winnow’ (C&B, Be, Vi, dS) |
| | *-pépò ‘wind, cold’ | > | vevo ‘umbrella’ (C&B, Be, Vi) |
| | *-páan- ‘give’ | > | -vána (dC), -vana (C&B, Be, Vi, Ta,
dS), -váaná (C&M), -vâânà (NM) |
| | *-páng- ‘act, make’ | > | -vánga (dC, NM), -vanga (C&B, Be,
Vi, Ta, dS, C&M, NW) |
| | *-pód- ‘be cold, cool down’ | > | -vola (Be, dS) |
| | *-póp- ‘speak’ | > | -voúa (dC), -vova (C&B, Be, Vi, Ta,
dS, KM), -vóva (C&M), -vòva (NM) |
| b. | *-bímb- ‘swell’ | > | -vinba (dC), -vimba (C&B, Be, Vi,
dS, KM, NW) |
| | *-bímbà ‘corpse’ | > | e-vimbu (dC, Be, dS), di-vimbu
(C&B, dS) |
| | *-bitá ‘war’ | > | vita (dC, Be, Ta), m-vita (C&B),
n-vita (Vi, dS) |
| | *-biì ‘excreta’ | > | tu-vi (C&B, Be, dS, KM), tú-vì
(NM), tou-vi (Vi) |
| | *-búdà ‘rain’ | > | m-vula (C&B, Be, Ta, NW), n-vula
(dS), n-voula (Vi), mb-vúla (C&M),
mvúlà (NM) |
| | *-dùmbí ‘continuous rain’ | > | nvumbi ‘neblina, calígem’ (dS) |
| | *-dògù/dàgù ‘wine, beer’ | > | ma-lavu (C&B, Be, Ta, dS, NW),
ma-lavou (Vi), ma-lavù (C&M) |

The only exception to the orthographic merger between < **b(h)** > and < **v** > in (4) is the word for ‘fire’ in de Cannecattim (1805) and in Tavares (1915). In early-twentieth-century Kisolongo, this notational inconsistency can no doubt be accounted for by the fact that according to Tavares (1915: 3), < **v** > is *antes de e, i, u, é, em geral, mais labial que lábio-dental* [‘before e, i, u, é, in general, more labial than labiodental’].

Tavares (1915) probably does not make the correct generalization here. The grapheme < v > is not consistently pronounced [β] in front of these vowels, but it rather represents the phoneme / β / in those words which originally had *p, as evidenced in the Kisolongo spoken today north of the Congo delta in the DRC where this phonemic distinction is still maintained. Lembe-Masiala (2007: 83) emphasizes that Kisolongo distinguishes between two kinds of / v /, i.e. the one which is also found in French [v] and one which is not found in French and is pronounced between the two lips and not by joining the lower lip and the teeth of the upper jaw, in other words [β]. During fieldwork in 2012, the KongoKing project team observed the same voiced labial fricative in Congolese Kisolongo reflexes of Proto-Bantu reconstructions containing *p, such as -**βía** (< *-pí- ‘be burnt’), **tu-βía** (< *-píà ‘fire’) and -**βóβa** (< *-póp- ‘speak’). It is also attested in the 2015 fieldwork data that Heidi Goes collected on Angolan Kisolongo, though not systematically. Further south along the coast, De Neef (2013) did not observe it in the data she collected with a consultant originating from N’zeto.

The occurrence of the phoneme / β / in both seventeenth-century Kikongo and in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Kisolongo could be interpreted as evidence for them being more closely affiliated to each other than to other South Kikongo varieties. However, / β / is also attested as reflex of *p in other South Kikongo varieties, such as Kizombo (Mpanzu 1994: 18; Fernando 2008: 32). Moreover, *p has the same correspondence in at least one other subclade of the KLC, i.e. the northern cluster of West Kikongo (de Schryver *et al.* 2015). Indeed, the sound shift *p > β has been reported in all varieties belonging to that subclade: Yingubi (B404) (Puech 1988: 259, 253, 254), Yishira (B41) (Blanchon and van der Veen 1990), Yisangu (B42) (Blanchon 1991), Yipunu (B43) (Blanchon 1991), Yilumbu (B44) (Gamille 2013), Kiyombi (H16c) (Nguimbi-Mabiala 1999: 32) and Civili as spoken in Mayumba (Gabon) (Ndinga-Koumba-Binza 2000). The scattered distribution of this specific reflex of *p in different subgroups is not surprising if one takes into account the split seriation of the successive changes which that stop underwent within the KLC in (5), as proposed in Bostoen *et al.* (2013: 66):

(5) Evolution path of Proto-Bantu *p in the KLC

	>	β	>	v
*p	>	°φ		
	>	h	>	ɣ° > ɣ

As shown in (5), β is obtained through the voicing of $^{\circ}\Phi$, which can be tentatively reconstructed as the reflex of intervocalic Proto-Bantu $*p$ in Proto-Kikongo. Through a further change in place of articulation, β shifts to v . The naturalness of the $\beta > v$ shift is apparent from the fact that v is the most common reflex of Proto-Bantu $*p$ within the KLC. Hence, if certain South Kikongo varieties no longer have a phonemic contrast between $/\beta/$ and $/v/$, it just means that they are more innovative in this regard than those South Kikongo varieties which maintained the β sound also attested in seventeenth-century Kikongo. This shared retention can thus not be taken as evidence for the fact that present-day South Kikongo varieties, such as Kizombo and Kisolongu, would be more direct descendants from seventeenth-century Kikongo than Kisikongo.

This being said, the fact that, as shown in (6), certain eastern South Kikongo varieties, such as Kitsootso (TST) (Baka 1992), Dihungu (DHG) (Atkins 1954) and Kipombo (PMB) (fieldnotes Heidi Goes 2015), provide evidence for the $*p > h$ shift is more relevant in this respect.

- (6) The sound shift $*p > h$ in eastern South Kikongo
- | | | |
|---------------------------------|---|--|
| $*-p\acute{ic}\acute{i}$ ‘bone’ | > | $k\acute{i}-h\acute{i}:s\acute{i}$ (TST), $ki-hisi$ (DHG, PMB) |
| $*-p\acute{a}an-$ ‘give’ | > | $-ha:na$ (TST), $-hana$ (DHG, PMB) |
| $*-p\acute{o}p-$ ‘speak’ | > | $-h\acute{o}h\grave{a}$ (TST), $-hoha$ (DHG, PMB) |
| $*-c\acute{e}p-$ ‘laugh’ | > | $-s\acute{c}h\grave{a}$ (TST), $-scha$ (DHG, PMB) |

The comparative data in (6) imply that if indeed South Kikongo is a discrete subclade within the KLC, as proposed in de Schryver *et al.* (2015) on the basis of synchronic lexical data, its most recent common ancestor, Proto-South Kikongo, must have conserved Proto-Kikongo $^{\circ}\Phi$. It furthermore implies that the South Kikongo subclade had already split into at least two subgroups in the seventeenth century, namely those languages that had undergone $^{\circ}\Phi > \beta$ and those that had undergone $^{\circ}\Phi > h$. The Kikongo attested in the seventeenth-century sources belonged to the first subgroup, just like all other South Kikongo varieties bearing witness to $^{\circ}\Phi > \beta > v$. Kitsootso, Dihungu, Kipombo bearing witness to $^{\circ}\Phi > h$, and their most recent common ancestor, on the other hand, belong to the second subgroup, and this since at least the early seventeenth century. In other words, seventeenth-century Kikongo can certainly not be considered

as ancestral to all present-day South Kikongo varieties. But if South Kikongo rather clusters with East Kikongo to form a subclade which is distinct from North Kikongo, West Kikongo and Kikongoid, as the diachronic phylogenetic tree in Figure 3.3 suggests, the comparative phonological data in (6) indicate that eastern South Kikongo is more closely related to East Kikongo than to the other two South Kikongo subgroups. Eastern South Kikongo and East Kikongo share the innovation $^{\circ}\Phi > \mathbf{h}$, which then further evolved as $^{\circ}\Phi > \mathbf{h} > \mathbf{y}^{\circ} > \mathbf{y}$ in East Kikongo (Bostoen *et al.* 2013).

Intervocalic Loss of *b

In the vast majority of words which seventeenth-century Kikongo inherited from Proto-Bantu or subsequent ancestral languages (cf. Bastin *et al.* 2002), the voiced bilabial stop $*\mathbf{b}$ is lost in between two vowels of which the second is not reconstructed as a closed vowel of the first aperture degree, as shown in (7). Only some of the examples found in Van Gheel (1652) are also attested in Cardoso (1624) (cf. Bontinck and Ndembe Nsasi 1978) and Brusciotto (1659) (cf. Guinness 1882), but all confirm the regular sound shift $*\mathbf{b} > \emptyset / V_ V_{[-\text{closed}]}$.

- (7) Regular loss of Proto-Bantu intervocalic $*\mathbf{b}$ in seventeenth-century Kikongo
- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| $*\text{-b}\hat{\mathbf{u}}$ ‘bad’ | > | $-\hat{\mathbf{i}}$ ‘ <i>mauvais</i> ’ (Ca), $\mathbf{u}-\ddot{\mathbf{y}}$ ‘ <i>deformitas</i> ’ (VG), $-\hat{\mathbf{i}}$ ‘bad’ (Br) |
| $*\text{-bid}$ ‘boil up’ | > | $\mathbf{cu-ila}$ ‘ <i>bullis; ebullio; ferúeo</i> ’ (VG) |
| $*\text{-b}\hat{\mathbf{i}}\mathbf{ng}$ ‘chase (away)’ | > | $\mathbf{cú-inga}$ ‘ <i>abigo</i> ’ (VG) |
| $*\text{-béed}$ ‘be ill’ | > | $\mathbf{cú-éla}$ ‘ <i>morbus</i> ’ (VG), $\mathbf{cu-ela}$ ‘to be weakened’ (Br) |
| $*\text{-bá}$ ‘oil-palm’ | > | $\mathbf{e-a}$ ‘ <i>palma</i> ’ (VG) |
| $*\text{-bábod}$ ‘sing, burn’ | > | $\mathbf{cú-aúla}$ ‘ <i>ustulo</i> ’ (VG) |
| $*\text{-bòd}$ ‘be rotten’ | > | $\mathbf{cú-ola}$ ‘ <i>putreo, currumpo</i> ’ (VG) |
| $*\text{-bómb}$ ‘mould in clay’ | > | $\mathbf{cú-úmba}$ ‘ <i>plasmo</i> ’ (VG) |
| $*\text{-bút}$ ‘bear, generate’ | > | $\mathbf{ocu-uta}$ ‘ <i>mettre au monde</i> ’ (Ca), $\mathbf{cú-úta}$ ‘ <i>genero; orior; pario; parturio; procreo</i> ’ (VG) |
| $*\text{-bók}$ ‘divine, cure invalid’ | > | $\mathbf{cú-úca}$ ‘ <i>curo; sacro</i> ’ (VG) |
| $*\text{-gàb}$ ‘divide, give’ | > | $\mathbf{cú-caa}$ ‘ <i>partior</i> ’ (VG) |
| $*\text{-dób}$ ‘fish with line’ | > | $\mathbf{cú-lóa}$ ‘ <i>piscor</i> ’ (VG) |

*-jóbud- ‘(to) skin’	>	-yu’uula ‘ <i>se dépouiller</i> ’ (Ca), cú-úúla ‘ <i>exspolio; núdo</i> ’ (VG)
*-tábi ‘branch’	>	lutai ‘ <i>ramus</i> ’ (VG)

As observed by De Kind (2012: 63), the intervocalic loss of **b* is not entirely regular in seventeenth-century Kikongo. A few cases of intervocalic **b* conservation are attested, but only one relates to a well-established Proto-Bantu reconstruction, i.e. **-bòd-* ‘break, smash; kill’. Van Gheel (1652) has the irregular reflex *cu-búla* ‘*affringo; confringo; conquasso; dimidio; findo; frango; quasso; rumpo*’, but possibly also a phonologically regular reflex with a slightly deviating meaning, i.e. *cú-úla* ‘*decortico; glubo*’ [‘to peel, rob’]. Other cases of intervocalic **b* maintenance, as those shown in (8), correspond to Bantu lexical reconstructions with a lower reliability and/or a shallower time depth (Bastin *et al.* 2002).

- (8) Irregular conservation of intervocalic **b* in seventeenth-century Kikongo
- | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--|
| *-bing- ‘be successful in palaver’ | > | cubinga ‘ <i>triumpho; uinco</i> ’ (VG) |
| *-bàag- ‘tear’ | > | cú-baaca ‘ <i>abrumpo; rumpo</i> ’ (VG) |
| *-bák- ‘get; catch; rob’ | > | cu-baca ‘ <i>assequor; comprehendo; destruo; impetro; nanciscor</i> ’ (VG) |
| *-bànji ‘rib; side of body’ | > | lu-bançi ‘ <i>costa</i> ’ (VG) |
| *-bò- ‘fall’ | > | cu-bua ‘ <i>cado; corruo; decido; occido; procumbo</i> ’ (VG) |

Some of the forms in (8) also manifest other irregularities, e.g. the devoiced final consonant in *lubansi* ‘rib’. Word-final devoicing is regular in East Kikongo varieties, such as Kintandu having *lubaansi* ‘rib’ (Daeleman 1983). Such multiple irregularities suggest that certain cases of **b* conservation can be accounted for by contact-induced copying from Kikongo varieties that regularly maintain intervocalic **b* (cf. *infra*). Moreover, regular sound changes do not necessarily affect all words satisfying the right phonological conditions in a language. Apart from dialect borrowing, other factors, such as analogy, lexical frequency or functional load, may also influence or inhibit sound change (Garrett 2014: 239–41). Nonetheless, it is unmistakably so that intervocalic **b* loss prevails in seventeenth-century Kikongo. This is furthermore corroborated by the fact that grammatical morphemes, such as the Proto-Bantu noun class prefixes **bà-* (cl. 2), **bì-* (cl. 8)

and *bò- (cl. 14), and their corresponding concord prefixes have also lost their initial consonant: **muleque/a-leque** ‘boy(s)’ (cl. 1/2), **qui-lumbu/i-lumbu** ‘day(s)’ (cl. 7/8), **u-lungu/ma-lungu** ‘ship(s)’ (cl. 14/6) (Brusciotto 1659, cf. Guinness 1882).

Apart from the seventeenth-century Kikongo sources, intervocalic *b loss regularly occurs in only one specific subclade of the KLC, namely South Kikongo. As shown in (9), it is observed in South Kikongo sources since the early nineteenth century. In all of these varieties, except Kimboma, the prefixes of classes 2, 8 and 14 also lost their initial bilabial stop. The exceptionality of Kimboma ties in with the fact that this variety rather clusters with Central Kikongo in the diachronic lexicon-based phylogenetic tree included in this chapter, and not with South Kikongo as was the case in the earlier synchronic lexicon-based phylogenetic tree in de Schryver *et al.* (2015).

- (9) Regular loss of Proto-Bantu intervocalic *b in South Kikongo varieties since the nineteenth century

*-bû ‘bad’	>	yi ‘ugliness’ (Be)
*-bid- ‘boil up’	>	-yila ‘boil’ (C&B), -yila ‘boil’ (Be), -ila ‘bouillir’ (Vi), -iila ‘ferver’ (dS), -yíl- ‘bouillir’ (KM), -yíla ‘boil’ (KK)
*-bing- ‘chase (away)’	>	-yinga ‘chase away’ (Be), -iinga ‘chase away’ (dS)
*-béed- ‘be ill’	>	-yela ‘be ill’ (C&B), -yeela ‘be ill’ (Be), -iela ‘être malade’ (Vi), ku-ielanga ‘está doente’ (Ta), -iela ‘doença’ (dS), -yéelá ‘be sick’ (C&M), -yèèlà ‘être malade’ (NM), -yééla ‘be ill’ (KK)
*-bá ‘oil-palm’	>	eia ‘palmeira’ (dC), diya ‘palm’ (C&B), eya ‘oil palm’ (Be), ia ‘palmier’ (Vi), eia ‘palmeira’ (Ta), éia ‘palmeira’ (dS), yá ‘oil palm tree’ (C&M), díya ‘oil-palm’ (KK)
*-bábud- ‘singe, burn’	>	-yaula ‘to cook so that it is well done outside and raw inside’ (Be), -iaúla ‘passar pela chama’ (dS)
*-bòd- ‘be rotten’	>	a-óla ‘podre’ (dC), -wóla ‘to rot or putrefy, to be corrupt or rotten’ (C&B), -wola ‘decay, rot’ (Be), -ola ‘pourrir’ (Vi), -ola ‘putrefazer’ (dS), -wolá ‘rot’ (C&M), -wòl- ‘pourrir’ (NM), -wola ‘pourrir’ (NW), -wóla ‘rot’ (KK)

*-bómb- ‘mould in clay’	>	-wumba ‘make pottery’ (Be)
*-bót- ‘bear, generate’	>	-wuta ‘to bear or bring forth’ (C&B), -wuta ‘bear, bring forth’ (Be), -outa ‘ <i>enfanter</i> ’ (Vi), -ut- ‘ <i>dar à luz</i> ’ (Ta), -uuta ‘ <i>dar à luz</i> ’ (dS), -wùt- ‘ <i>accoucher</i> ’ (NM), -wúta ‘bring forth’ (KK)
*-bók- ‘divine, cure invalid’	>	-wuka ‘to work a charm on man, to attend or to treat medically’ (C&B), -wuka ‘give medicine, heal’ (Be), -uuka ‘ <i>curar</i> ’ (dS), -wúka ‘treat for illness’ (C&M), wúk- ‘ <i>soigner</i> ’ (NM)
*-gàb- ‘divide, give’	>	-kaia ‘divide (distribute)’ (C&B), -kaya ‘to distribute, divide, deal out, allot, give away’ (Be), -kaia ‘ <i>partager</i> ’ (Vi), -kaila ‘ <i>dar a alguém</i> ’ (Ta), -káia ‘ <i>contribuir</i> ’ (dS), -kayíla ‘divide, share with’ (C&M), -kày- ‘ <i>partager</i> ’ (NM), -káya ‘divide’ (KK)
*-dób- ‘fish with line’	>	-lóa ‘ <i>pescar</i> ’ (dC), -lôa ‘fish (with a line)’ (C&B), -lowa ‘fish with hook’ (Be), -loia ‘ <i>pêcher</i> ’ (Vi), -lôya ‘fish with line’ (KK)
*-jòbòd- ‘(to) skin’	>	-yuwula ‘to slough (as a reptile), to cast (the skin)’ (Be)
*-tábi ‘branch’	>	tai ‘branch’ (C&B), tayi ‘branch’ (Be)

Intervocalic *b loss is a regular sound change in none of the other KLC subclades. As shown in (10) on the basis of data from one representative language per subclade, *b is generally maintained in this phonological context. The languages selected are Kimanyanga (MNY) for Central Kikongo (Laman 1936), Kintandu (NTD) for East Kikongo (Daeleman 1983), Kihangala (HGL) for North Kikongo (Nguimbi-Mabiala 1999), Ciwoyo (WY) for southern West Kikongo (KongoKing fieldnotes 2012, WY1 in Fig. 3.2) and Yilumbu (LMB) for northern West Kikongo (Mavoungou and Plumel 2010).

- (10) Regular conservation of Proto-Bantu intervocalic *b in other Kikongo varieties
- | | | |
|------------------------|---|---|
| *-bid- ‘boil up’ | > | -bila ‘boil’ (MNY), -bil- (NTD), kù-
bìlà (HGL) |
| *-bing- ‘chase (away)’ | > | -binga (MNY), -bing- ‘être à l’affut
(en chassant)’ (NTD), bìng- (HGL),
u-bing-a ‘ <i>pratiquer la chasse avec
des chiens</i> ’ (LMB) |

*-béed- ‘be ill’	> -beela (MNY), -béél- (NTD), béélé (HGL), -beela (WY), u-beel-a (LMB)
*-bá ‘oil-palm’	> li-ba (MNY), bá (NTD), bà (HGL), byá (WY), di-ba (LMB)
*-bábod- ‘singe, burn’	> -bābula ‘rôtir, griller, brûler’ (MNY), -babul- ‘brûler légèrement’ (NTD), bābùlā ‘flamber’ (HGL)
*-bòd- ‘be rotten’	> -bola (MNY), -bol- (NTD), -bòlá (HGL), -bola (WY), u-bol-a (LMB)
*-bómb- ‘mould in clay’	> -bumba (MNY), -búumb- (NTD), -bumba (WY)
*-bót- ‘bear, generate’	> -buta (MNY), -bút- (NTD), -bùtá (HGL), -búta (WY), u-bur-a (LMB)
*-bók- ‘divine, cure invalid’	> -búka (MNY), -búk- (NTD), -bùká (HGL), -búka (WY), u-bugh-a (LMB)
*-gàb- ‘divide, give’	> -kaba (MNY), -kab- (NTD), -kàbá (HGL), -kába (WY), u-ghab-a (LMB)
*-dób- ‘fish with line’	> -lóba (MNY), -lób- (NTD), -lòbà (HGL), -lóba (WY), u-lob-a (LMB)
*-jòbòd- ‘(to) skin’	> -yùbula ‘changer de peau’ (MNY), -yùbùlā ‘enlever la peau’ (HGL)

Cases of intervocalic *b loss are rare in those languages and are only observed with certain specific common Bantu words, such as the first three in (11), which seem to have lost *b in most languages of the KLC suggesting that it was already absent in their most recent common ancestor. In other cases, such as the common Kikongo word for ‘rule over’ in (11), irregular *b loss can possibly be accounted for by contact-induced spread from South Kikongo where that sound shift is regular.

(11) Irregular loss of Proto-Bantu intervocalic *b in other Kikongo varieties

*-bédò ‘door’	> mwelo (MNY), mweeló ‘baie de porte’ (NTD), múéló (HGL)
*-bókò ‘arm, hand’	> koko (MNY), kookó (NTD), -ókò (HGL), kóóko (WY), ghu-oghu (LMB)
*-tábì ‘branch’	> ntai, ntáyì (MNY), ntayí (NTD), di-tayì (LMB)
*-biád- ‘rule over’	> -yàala ‘régner’, -byāla ‘être chef’ (MNY), -yáál- (NTD), -yála (WY)

Kindibu is the only variety which does not belong to the South Kikongo subclade in the classification of de Schryver *et al.* (2015), but

where *b loss is still regular, as shown in (12). This seems to confirm that Central Kikongo is indeed a centrally located convergence zone that arose through intensive language contact rather than a true phylogenetic subclade. It furthermore suggests that genealogically speaking Kindibu belongs to South Kikongo.

(12) Regular loss of Proto-Bantu intervocalic *b in Kindibu (Coene 1960)

*-bìd- ‘boil up’	> -yila
*-bá ‘oil-palm’	> ya
*-bòd- ‘be rotten’	> -bola ‘pourrir’, -wola ‘se gangrener’
*-bómb- ‘mould in clay’	> -wumba
*-bót- ‘bear, generate’	> -buta ‘enfanter’, -wuta mvuma ‘fleurir’
*-bók- ‘divine, cure invalid’	> nganga a wuka ‘médecin’
*-gàb- ‘divide, give’	> kaya

In contrast to *d retroflexion and *p lenition, intervocalic *b loss does confirm that seventeenth-century Kikongo is South Kikongo. This sound shift is only regularly attested in historical or present-day varieties that belong to that specific subclade of the KLC or – in the case of Kindibu – may once have belonged to it. However, this is not the end of the story, since intervocalic *b loss does not seem to be regular in the entire South Kikongo subclade. In at least two eastern South Kikongo varieties, i.e. Kindamba (DMB) on which Heidi Goes carried out fieldwork in 2015 and the Kizombo (ZMB) variety studied by Mpanzu (1994), *b is neither systematically deleted nor does it always become a glide in intervocalic position, but it regularly undergoes velarization. As demonstrated in (13), both varieties share several common Bantu words where the intervocalic voiced bilabial stop *b has become the voiced velar stop g: *b > g /V__V_[-closed]. Other eastern South Kikongo varieties for which Heidi Goes collected new field data, i.e. Kitsootso (TST), Kipombo (PMB), Kisibemba (SBM) and Dihungu (DHG), rather adhere to the common South Kikongo pattern of intervocalic *b loss.

(13) Velarization of Proto-Bantu intervocalic *b in Kizombo and Kindamba as opposed to other eastern South Kikongo varieties

*-bìd- ‘boil up’	> -gílà, -ìl- (ZMB), -gil- (DMB), -yil- (TST, SBM, PMB)
*-béed- ‘be ill’	> -géeél- (ZMB), -geela (DMB), -weela (TST, PMB, DHG), -yeela (SBM)
*-bòd- ‘be rotten’	> -gól- (ZMB), -gola (DMB), -wola (TST, SBM)

*-bádík-/bátík- ‘begin’	>	-gát-ík-a (ZMB), -yatika (DMB, TST), -watika (PMB), -atik-a (DHG)
*-bómb- ‘mould in clay’	>	-gumba (ZMB, DMB), -wumba (TST, PMB)
*-bót- ‘bear, generate’	>	-guta (DMB), -wuta (TST, PMB)
*-bók- ‘divine, cure invalid’	>	-gúkà (ZMB)
*-gàb- ‘divide, give’	>	-kaya (DMB, TST, SBM)
*-dób- ‘fish with line’	>	-lowa (DMB, TST, PMB, SBM)

Given that this intervocalic velarization of Proto-Bantu *b is not attested elsewhere within South Kikongo, it potentially indicates that the languages sharing this very distinctive innovation, i.e. Kizombo and Kindamba, are more closely related among each other than with other South Kikongo varieties. In the lexicon-based phylogenetic classification, both varieties also cluster together in what seems to be a distinct eastern subunit within South Kikongo. This subgroup also includes Kitsootso, Kipombo, Dihungu and Kisibemba, in which *b velarization is not attested. However, at least the first three of these varieties share a feature which is possibly an intermediate step between *b loss and the rise of an intervocalic velar sound, i.e. the generalization of the labial-velar glide or approximant /w/. As can be observed in several examples in (9), (11) and (12), when *b is deleted, it is actually represented by the glides y and w. This is not really a reflex of *b, but rather a so-called ‘vowel hiatus resolution’, i.e. the phonetic transition between two successive vowels. In the seventeenth century and certain more recent South Kikongo sources, this transition glide was never noted. In others, it was, but often inconsistently. Its purely phonetic status is evidenced by the fact that the articulatory nature of this glide is entirely predictable on the basis of the following vowel. If it is a back vowel, w appears; if not, one gets y. However, as can be seen in the words for ‘be ill’ and ‘begin’ in (13), this is no longer (always) the case in Kitsootso, Kipombo and Dihungu. The labial-velar approximant w is also observed in front of certain non-back vowels and is thus no longer predictable. This phonologization of w is assumed to be a first step towards the emergence of g as a reflex of Proto-Bantu *b along the evolution path sketched in (14) with the velar approximant uɟ and the velar fricative ɣ as possible intermediate steps.

(14) Evolution path of Proto-Bantu *b in the KLC

$$*b > \emptyset > w > (^{\circ}u) > y > g$$

If the generalization of intervocalic *w* is indeed a first step towards the development of *g* as regular reflex of *b, the eastern South Kikongo varieties Kitsootso, Kipombo, Dihungu, Kindamba and Kizombo share a distinctive phonological innovation which sets them apart as a discrete subunit within the larger South Kikongo subclade. Within eastern South Kikongo, the *b > w > g innovation allows to further isolate Kindamba and Kizombo, while the *p > h innovation distinguishes Kitsootso, Kipombo and Dihungu as a distinct lower-level subgroup. The specific evolution of Proto-Bantu *b within the eastern cluster of South Kikongo languages is a further indication of its distinct position within South Kikongo, even if according to the seriation in (14) the reflex of Proto-Bantu *b in seventeenth-century Kikongo (i.e. \emptyset) could still be ancestral both to *w* as attested in Kitsootso, Kipombo and Dihungu and to *g* as attested in Kizombo and Kindamba (in contrast to seventeenth-century β vs. present-day *h* as reflexes of *p).

Interestingly, this velarization of *b is attested in only one other variety within the KLC, i.e. East Kikongo Kimbata as studied by Bafulakio-Bandoki (1977) who establishes the regular correspondence between [b] in Kintandu and [ɣ] in Kimbata. Following the seriation in (14), *y* is the intermediate step between *w* as attested in Kitsootso, Kipombo and Dihungu and *g* as attested in Kindamba and Kizombo. Bafulakio-Bandoki (1977) situates the distribution area of the sound shift *b > y / V__V_[closed] mainly south of the Mfidi river and east of the Inkisi river in the Lower Congo Province of the DRC. The KongoKing project team also observed it in 2012 among the Bambata potters of the Nsangi-Binsu village (Kaumba 2017). They call their clay *luyumba*, a reflex of the common Bantu pottery term *bómbà (Bostoen 2005). However, not all Kimbata speakers whom the KongoKing project team interviewed manifest this sound shift systematically. Many just maintain the bilabial stop in intervocalic position, as is commonly the case in East Kikongo. The instability of this distinctive sound change can no doubt be accounted for by the fact that present-day Kimbata is strongly influenced by Kintandu, the main East Kikongo variety. The velarization of *b is also not systematic in all varieties of Kizombo. It is entirely absent from the data published by Hazel Carter. The Kizombo

variety of her main consultant and co-author João Makondekwa was perhaps also more influenced by Kisikongo as spoken at Mbanza Kongo, the principal South Kikongo variety. This feature may once have had a wider distribution area, but is clearly on its way out due to the contact-induced impact of more vehicular Kikongo varieties, such as Kisikongo and Kintandu, which are used in education, religion and national media. It is remarkable that such a highly characteristic innovation is shared by varieties that are neighbouring but belong to distinct subclades, i.e. Kimbata (East Kikongo) on the hand and Kizombo and Kindamba (South Kikongo) on the other hand. This suggests intensive language contact across genealogical Kikongo subgroups. Given that *b velarization is attested in at least two distinct South Kikongo varieties and that the steps leading to *b > y/g are also found in eastern South Kikongo, it is most likely an innovation that originated in the latter subunit and must have impacted Kimbata from there through contact-induced change of some sort.

Phonological Augment Merger

A distinctive feature of seventeenth-century Kikongo in terms of noun morphology is the use of what is traditionally called ‘augment’ in Bantu linguistics (De Blois 1970). It precedes the regular class prefix of a noun and is therefore also known as a ‘pre-prefix’. The augment may serve a range of functions, such as indicating definiteness, specificity, focus and/or it may mark the syntactic function of a noun. As discussed by Katamba (2003: 107), these functions vary across the Bantu languages and can seldom be equated with that of a determiner or an article in European languages, as many early scholars erroneously did. So did Brusciotto (1659) in his grammar of seventeenth-century Kikongo in which he refers to both augments and noun prefixes as ‘articles’. He also refers to augments as particles, as in the following description of what is currently known as ‘class 6’ in the Bantu nominal classification system: ‘In the direct case in the plural it admits the article O, as the praises, *O matondo*, which is understood when some declarative particle is added, as the praises of God are good, *O matondo ma n’Zambianpungu ma maote*, otherwise it is placed absolutely, as in the singular. In the oblique cases in the plural it admits the same particle O, as, let us love the praises of God, *Tuzitissa o matondo ma n’Zambianpungu*: the rest as in the singular’ (Guinness

1882: 3). While in this passage Brusciotto (1659) writes the class 6 augment *o-* disjointly from the following noun prefix *ma-*, he elsewhere writes it conjointly as in the following description of the class 3/4 pair, or ‘principiation’ in his own words: ‘Nouns of this principiation sometimes admit the article *O* before them in the singular, and then chiefly when followed by some declarative particle; as the work of God, God will esteem, *Omufunu üa n’Zambianpungu uafuaniquinea cuzitissua*, &c.: but when it is placed alone and simply, it admits it not, as work of God, *Mufunu üa n’Zambianpungu*. In the oblique cases, nouns placed actively admit the same article as, I prosecute the work of God, *Jalanda omufunu ua n’Zambianpungu*. In the plural simply they admit no article, as the works of God I prosecute, *imeno jalanda emifunu mia n’Zambianpungu*’ (Guinness 1882: 4–5). In contrast to what Brusciotto (1659) claims here, the plural class 4 obviously does admit an augment, i.e. *e-* as in *e-mi-funu* ‘works’. In Proto-Bantu, the augment has been reconstructed ‘identical in form with the pronominal prefix’ (Meeussen 1967: 99), thus with a Consonant Vowel shape. In most present-day Bantu languages, however, their initial consonant has been dropped and they take the shape of a simple vowel. As shown in Table 3.3, such was the case in seventeenth-century Kikongo.

As can be deduced from Table 3.3, not every noun class had a distinctive augment in seventeenth-century Kikongo. This morpheme only had two distinct shapes, i.e. *o-* and *e-*. These can be considered to be allomorphs, i.e. different phonologically conditioned realizations of a same underlying morpheme. The shape *e-* only occurs when the following noun prefix also has a front vowel or a simple nasal; otherwise one gets *o-*. This binary contrast is actually a simplification of an older 3-vowel pattern *e-a-o*, whereby one also gets a central vowel when the noun prefix has one, for instance *e-mi-*, *a-ma-*, *o-mu-*. Through vowel lowering, the *e-a-o* pattern is in its turn derived from another 3-vowel pattern, i.e. *i-a-u*, whereby the augment vowel is simply identical to the vowel of the prefix vowel, for instance *i-mi-*, *a-ma-*, *u-mu-*. Both 3-vowel patterns are widespread in Bantu (De Blois 1970: 99–101), but neither of them is attested within the KLC. The augment actually disappeared in most subclades of the KLC. It is entirely absent from Kikongoid, East Kikongo, North Kikongo and Central Kikongo.

Figure 3.4 summarizes how we reconstruct the evolution of phonological augment merger in those subclades where a vocalic augment is

Table 3.3 *Augments and noun class prefixes in seventeenth-century Kikongo according to Brusciotto (1659)*

Class	AUG+NP	Brusciotto (1659)	
1	o-mu-	omuleque	‘boy’
2	o-a-	oaleque	‘boys’
3	o-mu-	omufunu	‘work’
4	e-mi-	emifunu	‘works’
5	e-(ri)-	e(ri)tondo	‘praise’
6	o-ma-	omatondo	‘praises’
7	e-ki-	equilumbu	‘day’
8	e-i-	eilumbu	‘days’
9	e-N-	enbongo	‘fruit’
10	e-ziN-	ezinbongo	‘fruits’
11	o-lu-	olutûmu ³	‘commandment’
12	?-ka	cassasila	‘altitude’
13	o-tu-	otutumumu	‘commandments’
14	o-u-	oulungu	‘ship’
15	o-ku-	ocuria	‘food’

still attested, i.e. West Kikongo and South Kikongo, where reductions towards a 2-vowel or even a 1-vowel pattern took place. Remnants of the **i-a-u** pattern are found in West Kikongo. Within northern West Kikongo, aka the Shira-Punu group (B40), Yingubi is the only member to have retained a vocalic augment, i.e. **i-** for all classes, while a tonal augment can be postulated at a more abstract level for the other members (Puech 1988). Southern West Kikongo is more conservative in that its members manifest (traces of) the 2-vowel **i-u-u** pattern. In contrast to Yingubi – and by extension northern West Kikongo – which levelled the original 3-vowel contrast in favour of the front vowel **i-**, southern West Kikongo underwent a partial levelling towards the back vowel **u-**, which is an important indicator of genealogical subgrouping within West Kikongo. The French-Kikongo dictionaries, which French missionaries compiled in the late eighteenth century, testify to this southern West Kikongo **i-u-u** pattern (Drieghe 2014: 119), as shown in Table 3.4.

³ Brusciotto (1659) does not provide the word **lutumu** with an augment, but Cardoso (1624) has it as **olutûmu** (Bontinck and Ndembe Nsasi 1978: 141).

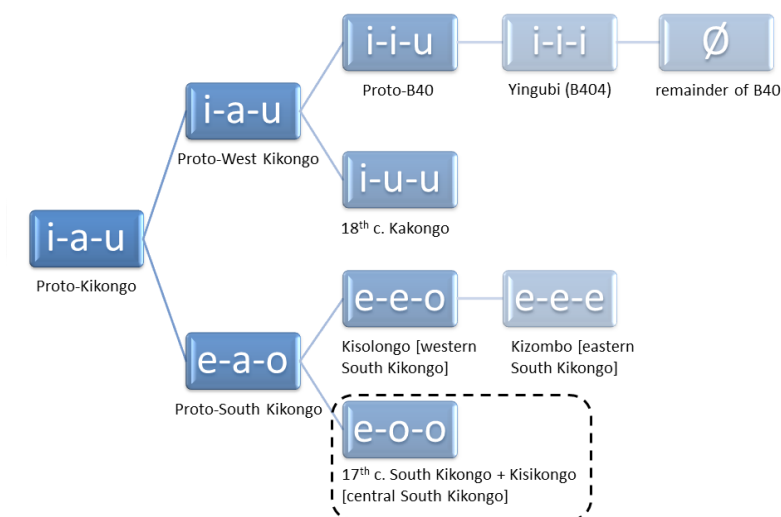


Figure 3.4 The evolution of phonological augment merger in West and South Kikongo

Kikongo as spoken during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in the Kongo and Kakongo kingdoms respectively thus underwent a similar reduction towards a 2-vowel augment pattern in favour of the back vowel, but seventeenth-century Kikongo underwent vowel lowering to obtain *e-o-o*, while eighteenth-century Kikongo as spoken in Kakongo did not partake in this innovation. This variation is crucial for genealogical subgrouping within the KLC, since present-day West Kikongo varieties systematically have high vowel augments as in eighteenth-century Kikongo from Kakongo, while present-day South Kikongo varieties systematically have mid-vowel augments as in seventeenth-century Kikongo. Augment vowel lowering from the Proto-Kikongo *i-a-u* pattern to the Proto-South Kikongo *e-a-o* pattern is thus a shared innovation that corroborates South Kikongo as a discrete genealogical subclade within the KLC, primarily with regard to West Kikongo, which did not undergo it, but maintained Proto-Kikongo *i-a-u* (cf. Figure 3.4). Other KLC subgroups, not represented in Figure 3.4, distinguish themselves from South Kikongo and West Kikongo by the complete loss of vocalic augments.

The evolution of vocalic augments not only corroborates the genealogical position of seventeenth-century Kikongo within South Kikongo,

Table 3.4 *Augments and noun class prefixes in eighteenth-century Kikongo from Kakongo as found in a 1772 dictionary manuscript (Anonyme 1772a, cf. Drieghe 2014: 119)*

Class	AUG+NP	Kakongo (1772)	
1	u-mu-	u mu-ntu	‘person’
2	u-ba-	u ba-ntu	‘persons’
3	u-mu-	u mu-aia	‘yawn’
4	i-mi-	i mi-aia	‘yawns’
5	i-li-	i li-ambu	‘thing’
6	u-ma-	u m’ambu	‘things’
7	i-ki-	i ki-ndélé	‘commodity’
8	i-bi-	i bi-ndélé	‘commodities’
9	i-N-	i npoko	‘horn’
10	i-ziN-	i zinpoko	‘horns’
11	u-lu-	u lu-kata	‘box’
13	u-tu-	u tu-imbu	‘songs’
14	u-bu-	u bu-ala	‘dwelling’
15	u-ku-	u kuela	‘marriage’

it also helps to determine more precisely its exact position within that subclade. Younger South Kikongo varieties manifest augment variation in such a way that not all of them can directly descend from seventeenth-century Kikongo. While certain varieties manifest the same *e-o-o* augment pattern as seventeenth-century Kikongo, others rather testify to a leveling of places of articulation in favour of the front vowel. They manifest *e-e-o* or even *e-e-e* augment patterns. The only South Kikongo sources complying with the *e-o-o* augment pattern of seventeenth-century Kikongo are those which describe the variety spoken in the vicinity of Mbanza Kongo, i.e. late-nineteenth-century Kisikongo as in Bentley (1887, 1895), mid-twentieth-century South Kikongo as in da Silva Maia (1961) and present-day Kisikongo as in Ndonga Mfuwa (1995). In these sources, nouns of classes 2 (*a-*) and 6 (*ma-*) are found with the *o-* augment, e.g. *o wantu* ‘people’, *o wana* ‘children’, *o mambu* ‘things’, *o maza* ‘water’, *o madia* ‘food’. The only exceptions to this pattern are found in Ndonga Mfuwa (1995) who provides *è-má-nkóndò* ‘bananas’ and *è-má-zà* ‘water’ for reasons unclear. However, in the Kisikongo novel *Ntambi za kulu eto* from 2010 written by his main consultant José T. Kumenda, these very same words consistently take the *o-* augment,

just like other words of classes 2 and 6. A possible explanation for the exceptions in Ndonga Mfuwa's Kisikongo grammar is interference from other South Kikongo varieties. This is not inconceivable, since most other varieties provide convincing evidence for the *e-e-o* pattern, as is shown in (15) with class 2 and 6 nouns found in Craven and Barfield (1883), Visseq (1889), Tavares (1915), Carter and Makondekwa (1987) and Lembe-Masiala (2007) (Le).

- (15) Irregular attestation of the *e-e-o* augment pattern in some South Kikongo varieties

*-jambò 'affair'	>	e mambu / o mambu (C&B), e m'ambou (Vi), e mambu (Ta, Le), omaámbu (C&M)
*-gadí 'oil'	>	e manzi (Vi), e máazi (C&M), e mazi (Le)
*-jínà 'name'	>	e mazina (C&B, Vi), o mazina (Ta)
*-pátà 'village'	>	e mavata (Vi, Le), o mavata (C&M)
*-díá 'water'	>	e maza (Vi, Le), omáaza (C&M)
*-jóódi 'yesterday'	>	emazuuzi (C&M)
*-ntu 'person'	>	e wantu / o wantu (C&B), e antou (Vi), e antu (Ta), owaantu (C&M), e yantu (Le)
*-jánà 'child'	>	e i ana (Vi), e ana (Ta), owaana / ewaana (C&M), e yana (Le)

The image that surfaces from the data in (15) is quite cluttered, but certain significant tendencies can nonetheless be distinguished. In two sources, the augment in front of noun prefixes of classes 2 and 6 is consistently *e-*, i.e. Visseq (1889) and Lembe-Masiala (2007), both bearing on Kisikongo as spoken north of the Congo delta, where the impact of Kisikongo is less pervasive than south of the Congolese-Angolan border. The *e-e-o* pattern is also attested in the Congolese Kisikongo fieldwork data gathered by the KongoKing project team in 2012 in Kanzi and Muanda. The two other sources bearing on varieties spoken along the coast and in the Congo delta area, i.e. Craven and Barfield (1883) and Tavares (1915), predominantly yield the *e-e-o* pattern and often have a doublet with the *e-* augment for those class 2 and 6 nouns attested with the *o-* augment. Hence, it is safe to assume that South Kikongo as spoken along the coast and in the Congo delta area – in other words Kisikongo – innovated its augment pattern differently from South Kikongo as spoken in the vicinity of Mbanza Kongo, i.e. a partial levelling of places of articulation in favour of the front vowel *e-* instead of the back vowel *o-*, as sketched in Figure 3.4.

The source in (15) in which the **e-e-o** pattern is most weakly attested is Carter and Makondekwa (1987). As highlighted above, their Kizombo variety seems to be strongly influenced by Kisikongo. Their language course still contains words, such as *é-mw-ána* ‘child’, *é-n-kkanda* ‘letter’ (cl. 3), *é-n-kkoko* ‘river’ (cl. 3) and *é-lú-ku* ‘cassava flour’, which do not comply with the Kisikongo **e-o-o** pattern, but rather point towards the use of **e-** even in front of noun prefixes that have or originally had a back vowel. Highly relevant in this respect is the fact that according to Mpanzu (1994: 75), Kizombo would indeed have uniformized its augment to the **e**-shape in front of all noun prefixes. This generalized **e-e-e** pattern has been reported in two other eastern South Kikongo varieties. Baka (1992: 69) notes that *le Kitsotso connaît un augment qui est représenté par la voyelle /e/ a toutes les classes*. Atkins (1954: 154) observes that ‘the ubiquitous *E* of Dihungu occurring in almost every conceivable context is a puzzling feature of the language. This *E* no longer serves a definite grammatical function, since it can usually be employed or omitted at will, except in certain negative constructions where *E* is probably a different particle. If, as might be thought, *E* were a remnant of a former double prefix, then its presence before zero prefixes, both nominal and verbal, would remain to be explained.’ This pattern is also observed – though irregularly – in the fieldwork data, which Heidi Goes collected in 2015 on Kitsootso and Dihungu and on other eastern South Kikongo varieties, such as Kindamba, for which she noted sentences such as *mbwa mutatika kena e mwana* ‘the dog bites the child’, *awu anatini e ana e mankondo* ‘they brought the children bananas’, *mono nkayisi e mase* ‘I’ve welcomed the parents’, *yani sumbuludi e nlele* ‘he bought the cloth’ and *yani mubuuka kena e menga* ‘he shed blood’. Even if the data for certain sources are quite disparate due to the strong contact-induced interference of the prevalent Kisikongo variety, eastern South Kikongo varieties also seem to have evolved in a different direction from central South Kikongo in terms of vocalic augment patterns. Just like western South Kikongo, as presented in Figure 3.4, it gave more prominence to the **e-** shape, though not only to the detriment of the **a-** shape but also to the detriment of the **o-** shape, resulting in a complete levelling towards **e-e-e**.

In sum, the phonological evolution of the augment within the KLC happens to be quite significant in terms of genealogical subgrouping. It not only allows isolating South Kikongo as a discrete subclade, but

also points towards the existence of three distinct clusters within South Kikongo, i.e. western, central and eastern South Kikongo. In contrast to South Kikongo as documented in the seventeenth-century sources, both South Kikongo as spoken along the coast and in the Congo delta area and South Kikongo as spoken east of Mbanza Kongo innovated their augment pattern differently, i.e. a levelling in favour of the front vowel *e-* instead of the back vowel *o-*. Given that western South Kikongo attests *e-e-o*, eastern South Kikongo *e-e-e* and central South Kikongo *e-o-o*, one cannot but reconstruct **e-a-o* in Proto-South Kikongo and assume that South Kikongo had already started to split into at least three distinct subunits in the seventeenth century. This indicates once more that South Kikongo as documented in the seventeenth-century sources is not directly ancestral to all present-day South Kikongo varieties, but rather only to the central Kisikongo variety spoken in the vicinity of the kingdom's former capital. Thanks to its social prominence, however, this central South Kikongo variety had a strong lateral influence on more western and eastern South Kikongo varieties resulting in messy augment systems, which presently considerably blur the regularity of the augment patterns that were inherited.

Conclusions

Table 3.5 summarizes the evidence discussed in this chapter and its historical relevance.

The historical-comparative linguistic evidence presented in this chapter leads to the inevitable conclusion that the three seventeenth-century Kikongo records that are still at our disposal today document one and the same variety of the language. This variety is nothing but Kikongo as spoken in Mbanza Kongo, the capital of the Kongo kingdom, and its immediate vicinity. In contrast to earlier assumptions that were based on an injudicious interpretation of comparative language data, it is not the Kikongo variety spoken in the coastal area of the Soyo province. Western South Kikongo varieties spoken along the coast on both sides of the Congo mouth as described in Craven and Barfield (1883); Visseq (1889); Tavares (1915) and Lembe-Masiala (2007), as well as eastern South Kikongo varieties as found in Atkins (1954); Carter and Makondekwa (1987); Baka (1992); Mpanzu (1994) and the 2015 fieldwork data of Heidi Goes are at best grandnephews or grandnieces of seventeenth-century Kikongo.

Table 3.5 *Linguistic evidence discussed in this chapter and its historical relevance*

Linguistic evidence	Historical relevance
Lexicon-based phylogeny	Seventeenth-century Kikongo is the direct ancestor of Kisikongo
*d retroflexion	Irrelevant for internal classification in contrast to early scholars who took it as evidence for considering seventeenth-century Kikongo as the direct ancestor of Kisolongo
*p lenition	This is a <i>shared retention</i> and does NOT indicate that Kizombo and Kisolongo are more direct descendants of seventeenth-century Kikongo than Kisikongo; seventeenth-century Kikongo is not ancestral to all present-day South Kikongo varieties
*b loss	A shared innovation corroborating South Kikongo as a distinct subclade to which seventeenth-century Kikongo belongs; the development of new (labial-) velar consonants after the loss sets eastern South Kikongo apart as a discrete subunit within South Kikongo and distinguishes Kizombo and Kindamba from other eastern South Kikongo varieties
Augment merger	A shared innovation corroborating South Kikongo as a distinct subclade to which seventeenth-century Kikongo belongs; Western, central and eastern South Kikongo had already split up in the seventeenth century; the seventeenth-century sources are directly ancestral to central South Kikongo, i.e. Kisikongo

The Kikongo found in the *Doutrina Christãa* (1624), the *Vocabularium Congense* (1652) and the *Regulae quaedam* (1659) is thus not ancestral to the entire KLC and not even ancestral to the entire South Kikongo subclade to which it belongs. Only Kisikongo from the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries as found in Bentley (1887, 1895), da Silva Maia (1961) and Ndonga Mfuwa (1995) can be considered as its direct descendants. The phonological data found in de Cannecattim (1805) are too patchy to determine the genealogical affiliation of the Kikongo variety he described within South Kikongo, but from a lexical point of view it clusters more closely with central South Kikongo, or thus Kisikongo, rather than with western or eastern

South Kikongo of which respectively Kisolongo and Kizombo are the principal representatives today.

Within the old kingdom of the Kongo, all missionary efforts from the seventeenth century onwards – and probably even earlier – until the early nineteenth century to document Kikongo exclusively focused on the variety spoken at Mbanza Kongo. When the London Missionary Society landed there in the late nineteenth century, William Bentley (1887, 1895) picked up the work that his predecessors had left unfinished. It was not before that time that missionaries of other denominations, such as Craven and Barfield (1883) and Visseq (1889), started to describe other South Kikongo varieties. Descendants of other Kikongo subgroups present in the Kongo kingdom, such as Kintandu (Butaye 1909, 1910) or Kimanyanga (Laman 1912, 1936), also had to await the attention of missionaries who arrived in the wake of European colonialism.

As far as the South Kikongo speaking part of the Kongo kingdom is concerned, the historical-comparative language data considered in this chapter thus corroborate the linguistic division into coastal, central and eastern dialects which Thornton (1983: 15) proposes. These three South Kikongo dialectal areas already existed in the seventeenth century and do not result from the collapse of the kingdom's centralized structure in the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as is often assumed. This process may have deepened the dialectal variation that already existed in the seventeenth century, but definitely did not trigger it. Not all inhabitants of the kingdom's southern provinces spoke Kikongo as documented in the seventeenth-century language sources, let alone those who lived in the kingdom's northern dominions where distinct though related languages prevailed.

In spite of genealogical divergence within South Kikongo specifically and the KLC more generally, political centralization and economic integration in the realm of the Kongo kingdom did stimulate intensive language contact across distinct Kikongo varieties. These protracted interactions have persisted until the present and have led to the contact-induced lateral transfer of language features between related languages. This can be deduced from the many phonological irregularities which present-day varieties – especially those from northern Angola – manifest with regard to the regularly inherited structures.

Finally, according to historical Kongo traditions, which John Thornton reconsiders in Chapter 1, the founders of the Kongo kingdom originated from either the chiefdom of Vungu situated north

of the Congo River in present-day Mayombe or the chiefdoms of Kongo dia Nlaza situated in the eastern part of the kingdom between the Inkisi River and the Kwango River. According to the historical understanding of the KLC we have today, these assumed centres of origins would have been located in areas where respectively West Kikongo and East Kikongo were spoken. Whatever the historical veracity of these origin traditions may be, the dynasties ruling from Mbanza Kongo in the course of the seventeenth century certainly did not speak a language which was dramatically different from the South Kikongo that prevailed then in the kingdom's heartland. If their ancestors were indeed foreigners who spoke West Kikongo or East Kikongo, they must have shifted to South Kikongo soon after their arrival in Mbanza Kongo. If so, they left nothing but possible minor traces of their original language in South Kikongo, such as the royal title *ngangula* of East Kikongo origin (Bostoen *et al.* 2013). Or, more parsimoniously, the origin of the Kongo kingdom must be situated in Mbanza Kongo itself, at which point the origin traditions become just that: legendary.

Acknowledgements

Thanks go to Manuel Ndonga Mfuwa, Afonso Teca, Inge Brinkman, Sebastian Dom and Heidi Goes for sharing fieldwork data and for their comments on an earlier version of this chapter. The usual disclaimers apply.

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